

Proposed Study Plan Change SP-T2

Task 7 and 8 under Study Plan SP-T2 concern evaluation of project effects on red-legged frog and giant garter snake, respectively.

The study plan - Task 7 called for a three step tiering survey method with Step 1 involving delineation of areas of potential project affects. Step 2 called for identification of potential habitat within areas of potential project affects. Step 3 called for protocol level population surveys within areas identified in Step 2.

Steps 1 and 2 were completed early in 2003. A DRAFT report identifying both potential giant garter snake and red-legged frog habitat was submitted to the USF&WS for review and comment. During its review the Service suggested that an alternative approach to protocol level population surveys of potential habitat might be appropriate. The Service suggested that DWR assume presence of red-legged frog and giant garter snake in potentially suitable habitat rather than conduct protocol level population surveys at this time. Assumption of presence does not preclude future changes in operations or land use. However, project specific protocol level surveys for red-legged frog could be required if habitat modifications are proposed within potential habitat in the future.

Task 8 already calls for assumption of giant garter snake presence in suitable habitat. Potential giant garter snake and potential red-legged frog habitat generally are contiguous and projects which affect habitat for one species also impact the other.

Protocol level red-legged frog surveys have a "shelf life" of 2 years. After 2 years the survey results are no longer considered valid by the Service. Protocol level surveys conducted at this time would only be valid until August 2005, well before a final FERC license is due.

Existing Study Plan Sub Task Description

Oroville Wildlife Area. Elderberry bushes are one of the most common shrub species within the portion of the OWA bordering the Feather River. Thousands (possibly tens of thousands) of elderberry stems greater than one inch in diameter are present in this area. DWR will continue to manage these areas for wildlife habitat without the addition of new facilities or ground-disturbing activities that would remove these plants. DWR will map these locations and determine density and beetle occupancy rates through sub-sampling. . These elderberry stands will also be assessed for intentional flood detention within the OWA, gravel mining, Oroville Facilities maintenance, and herbicide/pesticide use.

Proposed Change to the Study Plan Sub Task Description

DWR and DFG maintenance staffs suggested that the survey would be a better planning and avoidance tool if ALL elderberry bushes within 100 feet of project features were mapped within the OWA rather than sub-sampling per the USF&WS protocol. We submitted a written request to the USF&WS to map all elderberry bushes within 100 feet of all project features within the OWA and to defer protocol level surveys (collection of data concerning number of stems, size of stems, presence of VELB emergence holes, and habitat associations) until we had a project or maintenance activity which could affect individual bushes. The Service agreed that this approach made sense and approved our request in writing.